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Memories

(Episode 8)

We remained in Makkah Mukarramah for some days after Hajj. In those days I would take my respected mother (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon her) for Tawaf. I had memorized almost all the prayers (*duas*) of Tawaf by now and would recite them loudly, while many ladies would repeat them after me.

Makkah Mukarramah was a small city at that time. I was allowed to go out up to a roofed Bazaar, which I came to know was known as "*Souq Ul Mudda'a*" or "*Souq Ul Layl*" (This Bazaar has now been incorporated into the *Haram* after the new expansion). The son of Haji Sahab (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) had become our friend (and nowadays the grandson of late Haji Sahab is the owner of the famous perfume shop "*Surrati*"). He would sometimes take us to this bazaar. In those days one Pakistani Rupee comprised of sixteen *Annas* while one Saudi Riyal was equivalent to twenty *Annas*. I used to like a drink sold in that bazaar which was sold for one Riyal. After doing Tawaf or helping others do Tawaf, I had no other preoccupation in the remaining time except going to the Bazaar and having that drink.

When the time came to depart from Makkah Mukarramah for Madinah Munawwarah we came to know that the entire road was unpaved. Travelling by bus was unsafe because when the driver revved the bus up on unpaved road, passengers' heads sometimes hit the roof, causing injury. Also, a bus ride took a long time to reach Madinah Munawwarah. As a result our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) decided to travel by plane. We thus reached Jeddah again. We were told that the plane would depart around Maghrib time, so we reached the airport near Asar. What was the state of the airport? It was actually only a small building which did not have enough space for passengers to wait inside. All passengers thus had to wait outside the building, on the sand. We all spread a cloth and sat outside. This would be the first time I would be travelling by plane so besides the eagerness of visiting Madinah Munawwarah, I also had the childish excitement of travelling by a new mode of transport. It was announced that the plane would depart around Maghrib time, but we remained sitting there until Isha without any news of the plane. We continued waiting even after Isha till late night, until some passengers began to fall asleep.

A representative of the airline came around midnight with a list of passengers. He began calling out passengers' names to confirm their attendance. At the end he reached the name of a lady which had "*Musammaat*"¹ written next to it. He thought this was also someone's name and kept calling out "*Mussammaat*", "*Mussammaat*". How could any reply come to this name? Hence, he kept calling out this name from one end of passengers to the other without getting any reply. Finally, perhaps it was

¹ "*Musammaat*" is an Urdu equivalent to the English word "*Lady*" which is sometimes written next to someone's name

Bhai Jaan who explained to him that this is not a name, rather ladies write this word next to their names. Anyway! We gained hope that after this taking of attendance perhaps we would soon be asked to board the plane. However several hours passed by after his return without anybody coming to us, until the entire night passed by. When it was close to Fajr time, we were informed that the plane would depart soon and passengers were being boarded onto the plane. Our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) said that if we were to sit in the plane at this time we would miss Fajr prayer, so we intentionally delayed boarding the plane until we could pray Fajr. This was a small Dakota plane, and since it was my first flight I fully enjoyed it.

The runway of Madinah Munawwarah Airport was not paved; rather it was made of gravel. When a tire of the aircraft touched down on the ground gravel particles flew up in the air and the plane, instead of landing, bounced up and began ascending. After ascending a bit, it descended again and when its tire touched down on the ground it again bounced up and started ascending. Perhaps this happened three or four times, and only after that did it land. I thought this was the normal landing procedure of airplanes, but only later did I come to know that this had happened owing to some fault in the plane, due to which an emergency could have arisen. It was by the Grace of Allah Ta'ala that it successfully landed at the third or fourth attempt. When we disembarked from the plane, we saw that there was no building in Madinah Munawwarah Airport except one small room.

It was only the eighth year of my life, but the love of Madinah Munawwarah was infused in me from the beginning, and visiting this holy city felt like a beautiful dream. In those days the north gate of Masjid Nabawi, which was called Bab Al-Majeedy, used to be located at the corner of the first courtyard of the Turkish construction; meaning the length of the Masjid was hardly one-sixth of its present-day length. In front of this door, after some open space, a tunnel-like path which had shops on both sides lead to a building known as "Istafa Manzil". This was a building constructed by a friend of my respected father, late Haji Istafa Khan Sahab. He was a pious businessman of Lucknow, and had had this building constructed to provide free residence to those visiting Madinah Munawwarah during Hajj or otherwise. We stayed in the basement of this building. A peculiarity of this basement was that it contained a well; this was the same well which was located in the garden of the companion Hazrat Abu Talha Ansari (May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with him) and was known as Bir Ha or Bir Abu Talha. When the following verse of the Noble Quran was revealed:

لَنْ تَتَّالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ

Translation: You shall never attain righteousness unless you spend (in the path of Allah) from what you love.

The Noble companions (May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with them) used to desire not to miss out on any opportunity of doing good deeds. Thus almost all of them began searching their hearts for their favourite and most beloved possession. Thereafter each of them began giving those possessions in charity for the pleasure of Allah Ta'ala. There are many events related to this which appear in various

narrations.¹ One of those companions was Hazrat Abu Talha Ansari (May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with him). He said to the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him). "O Messenger of Allah! I love my garden Bir Ha the most and wish to give it in charity." The Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) replied: "Excellent! That is a very profitable property. My opinion is that you should spend it on your near relatives." He thus did so. It is mentioned in Sahih Bukhari that this garden was located in front of Masjid Nabawi. The Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) himself used to like the water of this well, and would eagerly drink it. This good fortune fell to our lot that we got the opportunity to stay near this blessed well twice, and were inundated with its blessings. Now Istafa Manzil and the well have been incorporated into the expanded part of the Masjid.

Our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) took us to Masjid Nabawi, introduced each and every section of the Masjid, and then took us to present our greetings to the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him). I don't remember exactly how many days we stayed in Madinah Munawwarah, but most likely it was eight days. During this time our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) took us to visit numerous historic sites, the first among which, after Jannat Al-Baqee', was Mount Uhud. We presented our greetings to the martyrs of Uhud, and I saw our respected father, Bhai Jaan and other companions trying to visualize the positions of the Pagan and Muslim armies, and trying to identify the hill at which the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) had deployed the archers. This hill is called Jabal Ar-Rumat, and the discussion regarding the direction from which Hazrat Khalid Bin Walid attacked this hill continued for some time without any decisive conclusion. We also visited Masjid Qiblatain during these visits, i.e. the Masjid in which the command to change the Qibla from Bait Al-Maqdis to the Honourable Ka'aba was revealed, and the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him), during prayer itself, changed his direction towards the Honourable Ka'aba. It was a small Masjid at that time, and contained two small *Mihirabs* opposite to each other. One of the *Mihirabs*, towards the north, was to indicate that the prayer was started facing Bait Al-Maqdis, and the other one was towards the south, in the direction of the Honourable Ka'aba, whereby the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) and his companions turned towards this one during prayer itself. Similarly we also got the opportunity to visit the place where the Battle of the Trench took place, and I saw my elders trying to determine the location and dimensions of the trench. Further, we also visited Masjid Quba. At that time this was also a small Masjid. A bar protruding from a specific wall indicated that the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) used to lead prayers at this spot. There was another small *Mihrab* in the courtyard of the Masjid about which it was said that this was the place where the she-camel of the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) would sit.

There was a garden in front of the Western gate of Masjid Quba. This was the garden which contained the famous well which is mentioned in Ahadith as "Bir Arees". Sahih Bukhari contains the following narration regarding this:

Sahih Bukhari (8:5)

¹ The details of these narrations can be found in Tafsir Maa'riful Quran Volume 2 Page 108 under the first verse of the 4th Juz.

عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ الْمُسَيَّبِ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي أَبُو مُوسَى الْأَشْعَرِيُّ، أَنَّهُ تَوَضَّأَ فِي بَيْتِهِ ثُمَّ خَرَجَ، فَقُلْتُ لَأَلْزَمَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ، وَلَا كُونَنَّ مَعَهُ يَوْمِي هَذَا. قَالَ فَجَاءَ الْمَسْجِدَ، فَسَأَلَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فَقَالُوا خَرَجَ وَوَجَّهَ هَا هُنَا، فَحَرَجْتُ عَلَى إِثَرِهِ أَسْأَلُ عَنْهُ، حَتَّى دَخَلْتُ بِنْرَ أَرِيَسَ، فَجَلَسْتُ عِنْدَ الْبَابِ، وَبَائِبُهَا مِنْ جَرِيدٍ حَتَّى قَضَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ حَاجَتَهُ، فَتَوَضَّأَ فَقُمْتُ إِلَيْهِ، فَإِذَا هُوَ جَالِسٌ عَلَى بِنْرٍ أَرِيَسَ، وَتَوَسَّطَ قَفْهًا، وَكَشَفَ عَنْ سَاقَيْهِ وَدَلَّاهُمَا فِي الْبِنْرِ، فَسَلَّمْتُ عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ انْصَرَفْتُ، فَجَلَسْتُ عِنْدَ الْبَابِ، فَقُلْتُ لَأَكُونَنَّ بَوَّابَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ الْيَوْمَ، فَجَاءَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ فَدَفَعَ الْبَابَ. فَقُلْتُ مَنْ هَذَا فَقَالَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ. فَقُلْتُ عَلَى رِسْلِكَ. ثُمَّ ذَهَبْتُ فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ هَذَا أَبُو بَكْرٍ يَسْتَأْذِنُ. فَقَالَ " ائْذَنْ لَهُ وَبَشِّرْهُ بِالْجَنَّةِ ". فَأَقْبَلْتُ حَتَّى قُلْتُ لِأَبِي بَكْرٍ ادْخُلْ، وَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِالْجَنَّةِ. فَدَخَلَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ فَجَلَسَ عَنْ يَمِينِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ مَعَهُ فِي الْفَقِّ، وَدَلَّى رِجْلَيْهِ فِي الْبِنْرِ، كَمَا صَنَعَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ، وَكَشَفَ عَنْ سَاقَيْهِ، ثُمَّ رَجَعْتُ فَجَلَسْتُ وَقَدْ تَرَكْتُ أَحْيَى يَتَوَضَّأُ وَيُلْحَقْنِي، فَقُلْتُ إِنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ بِفُلَانٍ خَيْرًا - يُرِيدُ أَحَاهُ - يَأْتِ بِهِ. فَإِذَا إِنْسَانٌ يُحَرِّكُ الْبَابَ. فَقُلْتُ مَنْ هَذَا فَقَالَ عُمَرُ بْنُ الْخَطَّابِ. فَقُلْتُ عَلَى رِسْلِكَ. ثُمَّ جِئْتُ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَسَلَّمْتُ عَلَيْهِ، فَقُلْتُ هَذَا عُمَرُ بْنُ الْخَطَّابِ يَسْتَأْذِنُ. فَقَالَ " ائْذَنْ لَهُ وَبَشِّرْهُ بِالْجَنَّةِ ". فَجِئْتُ فَقُلْتُ ادْخُلْ وَبَشِّرْكَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ بِالْجَنَّةِ. فَدَخَلَ، فَجَلَسَ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ فِي الْفَقِّ عَنْ يَسَارِهِ، وَدَلَّى رِجْلَيْهِ فِي الْبِنْرِ، ثُمَّ رَجَعْتُ فَجَلَسْتُ، فَقُلْتُ إِنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ بِفُلَانٍ خَيْرًا يَأْتِ بِهِ. فَجَاءَ إِنْسَانٌ يُحَرِّكُ الْبَابَ، فَقُلْتُ مَنْ هَذَا فَقَالَ عُثْمَانُ بْنُ عَفَّانَ. فَقُلْتُ عَلَى رِسْلِكَ. فَجِئْتُ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَأَخْبَرْتُهُ. فَقَالَ " ائْذَنْ لَهُ وَبَشِّرْهُ بِالْجَنَّةِ عَلَى بَلْوَى نُصِيْبِهِ " فَجِئْتُ فَقُلْتُ لَهُ ادْخُلْ وَبَشِّرْكَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ بِالْجَنَّةِ عَلَى بَلْوَى نُصِيْبِكَ. فَدَخَلَ فَوَجَدَ الْفَقَّ قَدْ مَلِئَ، فَجَلَسَ وَجَاهُهُ مِنَ الشَّقِّ الْآخِرِ. قَالَ شَرِيكَ قَالَ سَعِيدُ بْنُ الْمُسَيَّبِ فَأَوْلَتْهَا فَيُورَهُمْ

The gist of this narration is that Hazrat Abu Musa Ash'ari (May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with him) narrates that one day I decided to remain with the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) for the entire day. I went to Masjid Nabawi but did not find him. People pointed out the direction towards which the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) had gone, so I followed that path in his search and found him sitting at Bir Arees. He went to relieve himself, performed Wudu, then uncovered his blessed shins and sat in the middle of the well with his legs dangling. Hazrat Abu Musa Ash'ari (May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with him) says that I reached the gate of the garden and told myself that I will be the gatekeeper of the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) today. Shortly, Hazrat Abu Bakr (May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with him) arrived and pushed the gate. I asked "Who is this?" He replied "Abu Bakr". I said "Wait a while" and went to the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) and informed him that Abu Bakr has come and is asking for permission to enter. He replied "Let him enter and give him glad tidings of Paradise". Thus Hazrat Abu Bakr entered and sat on the right side of the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) with his legs dangling. Hazrat Abu Musa Ash'ari says that I thereafter returned to the gate. I had left my brother performing Wudu, and wished that if he came at this time it will be very good (so that I can ask permission for him to enter, and he can also get glad tidings of Paradise) but when there was some motion at the door this time, it was Hazrat Umar (May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with him). When I asked permission for him to enter, he was also given permission and glad tidings of Paradise. He sat on the left of the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) with his legs dangling. Then Hazrat Usman (May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with him) came. The Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) also gave him permission to enter, and gave him glad tidings of Paradise along with a trial which he will have to face. Now there was no more space to sit with the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) so he sat in front of him with his legs dangling. Hazrat Sa'eed Bin Al-Musayyab (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him), who is narrating this Hadith from Hazrat Abu Musa (May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with him) says, after narrating this incident, that I felt an indication from this event that after their deaths the graves of Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Umar (May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with them) came to be located adjacent to the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) while the grave of Hazrat Usman (May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with him) was not together with them, rather in front of them in Baqee'. (Sahih Bukhari, Book of Merits of the Companions)

When our respected father (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) came to this well he sat on it with his legs dangling, as well as Bhai Jaan, and following them I did the same.

A second remarkable feature of this well is that the Noble Messenger (Peace be upon him) had had a ring made, for sending letters, which had the blessed words "Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah" engraved on it. After his demise this ring was passed on to Hazrat Abu Bakr, then Hazrat Umar and then to Hazrat Usman (May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with them all). It is narrated in Sahih Bukhari that one day Hazrat Usman sat on Bir Arees while wearing this ring and, removing the ring, began tossing it from one hand to the other, when it slipped and fell into the well. Hazrat Anas (May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with him) relates that we continued searching for the ring in the well for three days but could not find it. Thereafter Hazrat Usman (May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with him) had all the water of the well removed but it could still not be found. (Saheeh Bukhari, (باب هل يُجْعَلُ نَفْسُ الْخَاتَمِ ثَلَاثَةَ أَسْطُرٍ؟). This well is therefore also known as Bir Al-Khaatam (the well of the ring).

I first visited this well with my respected father (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) when I was eight years old, then in 1963 and then again probably in 1964. When I visited after this the government had incorporated the garden and the well into a road.

During our stay in Madinah Munawwarah I got the opportunity to visit Jannat Al-Baqee' many times. It used to be open to visitors in those days. I also remember that I had broken a tooth during those days, regarding which my respected mother (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon her) told me: "Bury it in Jannat Al-Baqee' so that at least one part of your body gets buried in Jannat Al-Baqee'". I thus eagerly dug a hole in Jannat Al-Baqee' and buried the tooth there.

These are the few things I still dimly remember from that journey of Hajj. I also remember the journey by Safeena-e-Arab on our return, and also that during our return voyage we got the news that the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, respected Liaquat Ali Khan, was martyred in the Company Bagh of Rawalpindi. It was 16 October 1951 and a wave of shock had spread throughout the ship as soon as this news was received. I saw tears in my respected father's (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon him) eyes as well. Hazrat Haji Muhammad Afzal Sahab, the Khalifa (spiritual deputy) of Mufti Muhammad Hasan Sahab (May Allah Ta'ala's mercy be upon them both), was also travelling on that ship, and when this news reached us he was sitting close to our respected father (May his secret be sanctified). He was also teary-eyed and was repeating the sentence "This is the decision of Allah Ta'ala". Our respected father would also repeat these words, and I remember that this was the first time I had heard these words. The flag of the ship remained at half-mast for several days, until the ship reached the coast of Karachi.

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